

What is claimed is:

1. A footwear liner for holding a user's foot within an outer shell, the liner comprising:

5 a pliable enclosure for covering the user's foot, said enclosure including a heel portion; and

a tightener engaging said heel portion, tension on said tightener conforming said heel portion to the heel of the user.

10 2. The liner of Claim 1, further comprising a selectively engagable lock coupled to said tightener.

3. The liner of Claim 2, wherein said lock is removably secured to said liner and slidable with respect to said tightener.

15 4. The liner of Claim 1, wherein said heel portion includes a medial side, a lateral side, and an upper end, said tightener including a medial draw extending around said medial side of said heel portion and a lateral draw extending around said lateral side of said heel portion, said draws crossing at the upper end of said heel portion.

20 5. The liner of Claim 4, further comprising a front tightening system for securing the liner about the foot and ankle of the user, wherein said draws are coupled to the front tightening system.




25315
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- 12 -

KSNO-1-1002AP01

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6. The liner of Claim 1, wherein the tightener includes a tension application member secured at the rear of the liner.

5 7. The liner of Claim 1, further comprising a lateral tensioning element secured to the side of the liner adjacent said heel portion, said tightener being coupled to said lateral tensioning element.

8. An article of footwear for holding a user's foot, the footwear comprising:

10 a sole portion having a bottom side and a top side;

a foot portion fixedly secured to the top side of the sole portion and having

a front end and a back end,

a heel portion for receiving the heel of a user,

a midfoot portion for receiving the ankle and arch of a user's foot,

15 a control element secured to the midfoot portion;

a channeling element engaging the heel portion;

a draw engaging the control element and the channeling element, the draw selectively

tensionable to urge the control element toward the heel portion; and

a lock selectively engaging the draw to maintain tension in the draw.

20 9. The footwear of Claim 8, wherein the foot portion further comprises an opening for facilitating insertion of a user's foot, the control element being spaced apart from the opening, and the lock comprises a front tensioning system for selectively constricting the



25315

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opening, the draw being coupled to the front tensioning system to tension the draw whenever the front tensioning system constricts the opening.

10. The footwear of Claim 9, wherein the draw is a rear lace having a first end
5 portion secured to a point of attachment proximate an area chosen from the group consisting of the control element, the channeling element, the heel portion, the sole portion, and the midfoot portion, a second end portion coupled to the front tensioning system, and the channeling element further comprises a first guide, the rear lace passing through the first guide.

10 11. The footwear of Claim 10, wherein,
the point of attachment is proximate the sole portion,
the control element further comprises a control element eyelet,
the channeling element further comprises a second guide, the rear lace passing from
15 proximate the sole portion, through the second guide, through the control
element eyelet, and through the first guide, and

the footwear further comprises a third guide secured to the upper leg portion and
spaced
apart from the first guide, the rear lace passing from the first guide, through
20 the third guide, and securing to the front tensioning system.



25315

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12. The footwear of Claim 11, further comprising a second draw and a second control element, the channeling element engaging the second draw, the second draw selectively tensionable to urge the second control element toward the channeling element.

5 13. The footwear of Claim 12, wherein the second draw and second control element generally opposite the position and form of the first draw and first control element, the channeling element's engagement with the second draw opposite the engagement of the channeling element with the first draw.

10 14. The footwear of Claim 13, wherein the first, second, and third guides are tubes sized to receive the rear lace.

15 15. The footwear of Claim 14, wherein the front tensioning system is a lacing system comprising eyelets secured to the foot portion proximate the opening and a front lace threaded through the eyelets, and the channeling element, first control element, and second control element are sheets of thin, flexible material.

16. The footwear of Claim 15, wherein the foot portion further comprises a lower leg portion for covering the lower leg of a user, and a support secured to the lower leg portion, the third guide being formed monolithically with the support, the first and second guides being formed monolithically with the channeling element.

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25315

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17. The footwear of Claim 16, further comprising a shell made of a stiff resilient material, the shell being shaped to substantially surround the sole and foot portion, the foot portion being made of a soft deformable material.

5 18. The footwear of Claim 8, wherein the draw comprises a rear lace comprising a first end portion fixedly secured proximate either the heel portion, the midfoot portion, the channeling element, the control element, or the sole, a middle portion slidably secured to the channeling element, and a second end portion engaging the lock, the lock selectively preventing the rear lace
10 from sliding relative to the lock.

19. The footwear of Claim 18, further comprising a latch secured to the foot portion, the latch selectively securing the lock to the foot portion.

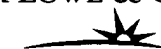
15 20. The footwear of Claim 19, wherein the foot portion further comprises a lower leg portion for surrounding the lower leg of a user, the lower leg portion comprising a top opening for permitting insertion of a user's foot and lower leg, the latch being secured to the foot portion proximate the top opening.

20 21. The footwear of Claim 20, wherein the channeling element is embodied as an overlay of flexible material secured to the heel portion.



25315

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22. The footwear of Claim 21, wherein
the control element is embodied as a control tether made of a sheet of flexible, resilient
material and having a control tether eyelet,
the first end portion is secured to the footwear proximate the sole portion, and
5 the channeling element further comprises first and second guides, the middle portion
of the lace passing from the sole portion, through the first guide, through the
control tether eyelet, and through the second guide.

23. The footwear of Claim 22, further comprising a second draw and a second
10 control element, the channeling element engaging the second draw, with the second draw
selectively urging the second control element toward the channeling element.

24. The footwear of Claim 23, wherein the second draw and second control
element substantially mirror the position and form of the first draw and first control element,
15 and the channeling element's engagement with the second draw mirrors the engagement of
the channeling element with the first draw.

25. The footwear of Claim 24, wherein the first and second guides are tubes sized
to receive the rear lace.
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26. The footwear of Claim 25, further comprising a shell made of a stiff resilient
material, the shell being shaped to substantially surround the sole and foot portion, and



25315
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wherein the foot portion is made of a soft deformable material, and the first and second guides are formed monolithically with the channeling element.

27. The footwear of Claim 26, wherein the latch comprises a projection having a first lip and a second lip, the second lip being selectively deformable, and wherein the lock
5 comprises an aperture sized to fit over the first lip and deformed second lip, but sized not to fit over the first lip and undeformed second lip.



25315

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- 18 -

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